

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

April 4, 2013

---

## **Educational access conference set April 18-19 at UAPB (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

Multiple workshops will be available to attendees at the 20th Annual Mary E. Benjamin Educational Access Conference April 18 and April 19 at the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff

With the theme, “Models that Work in Arkansas,” the objective of the conference is to highlight and learn from educational models in Arkansas that are making a difference. The cost of registration is \$85 a person with limited partial scholarships available for students. Due by April 16, registration forms can be downloaded at [www.uapb.edu](http://www.uapb.edu).

Day one will begin at 8 a.m. on Thursday with registration followed by a plenary session in the Sylvester Early Auditorium of Henderson-Young Hall that will feature Jelani Jabari, owner of

Pedagogical Solutions LLC in Detroit. After his plenary address, Jabari will present a workshop on the Practical Application of a Model that Works for Diverse Student Cohorts. Other plenary speakers will include: Shane Broadway, interim director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education; Matt McClure, superintendent of Cross County School District in Cherry Valley; UAPB Interim Chancellor Calvin Johnson; and Tracy Tucker, director of curriculum and instruction in the Division of Learning Services for the Arkansas Department of Education.

Day two will start with registration at 7:30 a.m. followed by a plenary session in the H.O. Clemmons Arena of the Kenneth L. Johnson, Sr. Health, Physical Education and Recreation

Complex with concurrent workshops over a broad range of topics:

The Problem Based Learning workshop will allow participants the opportunity to consider the benefits of engaging students in problem-based learning in mathematics. Participants will explore and discuss these benefits along with potential challenges while considering both the perspective of the student and the teacher.

In the workshop titled, “Maximizing Student Engagement: It is Easier than You (may) Think,” participants will learn ways to assess, select texts and design lessons to foster meaningful student engagement and achievement. Particular attention will be paid to African-American students and those who may be underachieving.

The “Safety in the Educational Environment” workshop is designed to provide law enforcement officers, school personnel and security personnel with a better understanding of the “potentially violent” or “at-risk” student based on past school incidents and lessons learned from personal

experiences. Workshop discussions will include maintenance of a safe and orderly campus, types of weapons found in a school or public environment, unique hiding places on campus and signs to watch for when a student may be concealing a weapon.

The “Effective Mathematics Teaching Strategies for the Arkansas Delta Learner” workshop will allow participants the opportunity to examine the teaching practices of K-12 mathematics teachers from the Arkansas Delta region. Participants will engage in lessons implemented by two middle school mathematics teachers who have facilitated positive mathematical outcomes for their students.

The Southern Regional Education Board will present a SREB/Literacy Design Collaborative in Action workshop where attendees will learn how to use SREB/LDC to promote career and college readiness in literacy. This workshop will explain how LDC addresses the new standards.

The “Mentoring with Success” workshop will focus on mentoring programs that have been successful in schools and communities.

During the Student Teacher Roundtable, student teachers will share their knowledge of and experiences with integrating technology into their teaching to enhance student learning. Two expert educators will serve as respondents.

For more information, contact Allyson Jackson at (870) 575-8477 or Erma K. Jones at (870) 575-8476.

---

### **Jacksonville starts petition drive to form new school district (Jacksonville Patriot)**

For years, supporters of Jacksonville divorcing itself from the Pulaski County Special School District has been a dream for many in that portion of the county.

That dream is becoming one step closer to reality as supporters of joint North Pulaski-Jacksonville public school district met Tuesday night at the Jacksonville Community Center to learn more information on what needs to be done to make the dream a reality.

“This is a work session for those in the community who want to get involved,” said Jacksonville Mayor Gary Fletcher. “For so long many people have come up to me and asked, ‘What can I do?’ And for so long we have had to tell them we are in the planning stages. Well the time for planning is over and now is the time for action. We need help from the general public.”

Fletcher said he is expecting the Jacksonville-North Pulaski community will need between 2,700-3,000 signatures from qualified people residing in the proposed area for the new school district.

“We are anticipating it will take five or six weeks to finish the petition drive,” Fletcher said.

Once petitions have been signed and gathered, it is expected that they will be delivered to the Arkansas Department of Education.

Fletcher stressed North Pulaski will be included in the district.

"It makes sense," Fletcher said. "To leave them in Special Pulaski County would make that community an island and many of the people there come to Jacksonville, go to church here. They are part of our community."

It is anticipated that once the new district is formed it should have between 4,500-4,700 students. The Pulaski County Special School District has about 16,000 students at the present time, Fletcher said.

"We will have a mid-sized school district in the state," Fletcher said.

Fletcher said it is not clear when the district will be formed because the issue remains tied up in the federal court system.

"I believe once we get in front of a judge, the judge will approve our new school district that it makes sense for the children and the community."

For years, proponents for a Jacksonville-area school district have said the region being part of PCSSD has hurt their community's economic growth prospects.

"We have young families move here because of the Little Rock Air Force Base and the first place they want to look at are the schools," Fletcher said.

Fletcher said many base personnel have opted to live close to Jacksonville because other areas have more modern facilities. However, with a separate school district on the horizon, that problem will end.

"People are willing to invest and work for something if they take ownership of it," Fletcher said.

Fletcher added that once a new district is set up, it would be represented by board members elected by school district voters and operated like other public school districts.

"Schools are more than a building," Fletcher said. "If you have control over your schools, it is easier to hold your students and teachers accountable."

Fletcher said he is very optimistic about Jacksonville's future and the future school district.

He added that Jacksonville's schools have improved since the state took over the PCSSD due to fiscal issues.

"But they can't run the schools forever," Fletcher said. "Eventually, it will go back to the district."

---

## **Williams chosen to lead DCSD (Advance-Monticellonian)**

Members of the Drew Central School District's faculty and staff joined community members to gather Monday evening for the special called school board meeting and announcement of the

District's new superintendent.

Last week the board had narrowed the list down to five candidates and the interview process began. A decision was made by the school board on Thursday but had to be approved by the

Arkansas Department of Education since the District is currently listed as being 'under financial distress.'

During Monday's meeting, the board announced longtime Monticello resident Billy Williams as the new Drew Central School District Superintendent effective July 1.

Williams and his wife of 42 years, Becke, attended the meeting and were congratulated by the District's board members, faculty and staff.

"I am excited to be joining the Pirate Nation," Williams proclaimed during the announcement.

Williams has been an educator for 37 years with 26 of those years in administration.

He began his career in 1975 as a graduate assistant, instructor and coach at Henderson State University.

His early teaching experience consisted of teaching biology and coaching basketball at Texas High School in Texarkana, Texas, Warren High School, and Howard Payne University in

Brownsville, Texas, before moving to Fordyce High School in 1982.

It was there, in 1986, that Williams moved into a new role as an assistant principal, which was added to his teaching and coaching responsibilities in. He became principal at Fordyce the

following year. He served Fordyce High School in that capacity until 1994 when he became principal at Monticello High School.

Williams left MHS in 2001 to become superintendent at Woodlawn, where he will finish out his contract on June 30.

"I used to coach against Drew Central and it was always a battle," he said.

As Drew Central's new superintendent, Williams will face another kind of battle as he takes the reigns at a school that's been struggling financially for the last few years.

"I think Mr. Johnston has done a great job this year making the necessary changes to pull the school district back on solid ground," Williams said referring to the fact that the district has been in fiscal distress.

"I feel confident I can play a major part in guiding this district into the future. Schools are still about the kids. We can't forget that."

Williams said he plans to be visible in the community and to visit with the school's stakeholders.

The Williams have been married for 42 years and are the parents to two sons, Thomas and Michael

---

### **School bus catches fire; none hurt (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

No one was injured when a school bus caught fire Wednesday in Pulaski County.

Deputies on scene said the fire appeared to have started in the engine area under the driver seat of the Pulaski County Special School District bus.

It happened about 7:45 a.m. on Atwood Road at Arch Street Pike.

Charles Blake, director of transportation for the district, said the driver was the only person on board. The bus was coming from Landmark Elementary School, where it had dropped off passengers.

---

### **Fawcett: Moving election won't help schools (Paris Express)**

Paris School Superintendent Wayne Fawcett said last week he's opposed to a bill moving through the Arkansas General Assembly that would move school elections from September to November.

Senate Bill 587 was one of several school-related bills the superintendent discussed during an interview. Fawcett said he's been in contact with school board members about school-related legislation through the current session and will update them at Thursday's regularly scheduled school board meeting. SB 587 has been approved in the Senate and is now making its way through the House.

"Theoretically, it'll increase participation in school elections," • Fawcett said. "In my opinion, it'll create more confusion and you'll have to print more ballots because school district boundaries don't always follow county lines."

"Secondly, schools have to pay for holding elections," • Fawcett said. "Printing more ballots will be much more expensive. It'll be cheaper on schools to continue holding elections in September."

Fawcett said the biggest school-related issue facing lawmakers is Senate Bill 65, which re-writes the state's law on school choice. Last year, U.S. District Judge Robert T. Dawson struck down Arkansas's school choice law, ruling that a race-based provision in the 1989 statute that restricted some transfers to prevent re-segregation violated the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees equal protection under the law. The ruling was appealed to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis, which heard oral arguments in January.

“One school of thought on this is to wait until the Eighth Circuit rules,” Fawcett said. “The other school of thought is to not wait and try to do something now. There have been seven bills dealing with school choice filed during this session.”

The Senate passed Senate Bill 65, the school choice measure, by 34-0 last week and sent it to the House, where the sponsor, Sen. Johnny Key, R-Mountain Home, pledged it would get a major rewrite.

In its present form, the bill would remove race as a factor in student transfers between school districts. He said he would amend the bill in the House to cap the number of student transfers at 3 percent annually and to include a July 1, 2015, expiration date.

He said he also would add a requirement that the state Department of Education collect transfer data and report to the education committee. Other changes he said he will propose would restrict transfers from districts currently under desegregation orders, and would specify that all transfers approved prior to enactment of the proposed new law would be exempt from it.

“It probably won’t have much impact on the Paris School District,” Fawcett said.

Another bill raising the minimum school district contribution to the cost of employee health insurance won’t impact the Paris district, either, Fawcett said.

“It raises the minimum contribution from \$131 a month per employee to \$150,” Fawcett said. “We’re already paying \$150.”

---

## **House rejects bill to halt enrollment-based school mergers (Log Cabin Democrat, Conway)**

LITTLE ROCK — Legislation to impose a two-year moratorium on school mergers based on enrollment failed Wednesday in the state House, while the Senate was briefed but took no action on a measure that would grant in-state college tuition for undocumented students.

A day after receiving a House committee’s endorsement despite objections by the state attorney general and education commissioner, House Bill 1938 failed before the full House by a vote of 46-26. The bill needed 51 votes to pass.

The bill by Rep. Randy Alexander, R-Fayetteville, would bar the state Board of Education from approving school mergers through April 30, 2015, for reasons other than academic or fiscal distress, or for failure to comply with state accreditation standards. It would give the House and Senate education committees the option to extend the moratorium through Dec. 31, 2016.

The legislation would mandate a study in the interim of administrative reorganizations — consolidations and annexations — and student transportation in selected school districts.

Currently, school districts that fall below 350 students for two consecutive years are subject to consolidation or annexation with other districts.

Presenting the bill on the House floor, Alexander said the current law forced the Weiner School District to consolidate with the Harrisburg district in 2010 even though Weiner had a strong academic record and had never been in fiscal distress.

“The only thing that they had failed to do was to keep 350 students,” he said.

Rep. Hank Wilkins, D-Pine Bluff, noted that the current law, which he helped to negotiate, was part of the state’s efforts to resolve the Lake View school funding lawsuit and comply with a state Supreme Court mandate to achieve adequacy in funding public schools.

He said that as a district’s student population declines it eventually reaches a point where it cannot be fiscally sound, and he asked Alexander what would be a better place to draw the line than at 350 students.

Alexander replied, “What’s important to me is the outcome: Is the school teaching kids?”

Rep. Skip Carnine, R-Rogers, a retired educator, spoke against the bill. He said the Legislature is under a state Supreme Court order not to change any part of the education reforms it enacted in the Lake View case unless the changes are based on evidence and research. No research has been done to justify the moratorium called for in HB 1938, he said.

In the Senate Wednesday, Sen. Joyce Elliott, D-Little Rock, presented Senate Bill 915, which would make anyone who attends high school in Arkansas for at least three years and graduates or receives a general education diploma eligible to pay the in-state tuition rate at a state higher education institution.

During a discussion open to officials other than senators, Randy Zook, president of the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce-Associated Industries of Arkansas, announced that the state’s largest business lobbying organization supported the bill. University of Arkansas at Little Rock Chancellor Joel Anderson also urged the Senate to support the measure.

“We need additional people to not only stay in Arkansas and be an active participant in the work force, but also to get as much education and as much training ... as they possibly can in order to be fully contributing, viable members of society,” Zook said, noting that about 500 people in Arkansas retire every day and many companies are finding it difficult to find educated and skilled employees.

Maricella Garcia, director of Catholic Immigration Services in Little Rock, said 14 states have passed similar legislation. The Oregon governor signed that state’s law Tuesday and a bill awaits the governor’s signature in Colorado, she said.

“This is not a new ... idea, just an idea whose time has come,” Garcia said.

Rosa Velazquez, 29, who was five when her undocumented parents moved to Arkansas from Mexico, also advocated for the bill and told reporters later she is working towards a degree at Cossatot

Community College, but it is taking time because she is having to pay out-of-state tuition, which is about \$100 more per credit hour.

Elliott said SB 915 was not about immigration, but about education.

“Education and economic development are crucial to our state going forward,” she said.

The bill is pending before the Senate Education Committee.

The Senate passed several bills Wednesday, including:

- SB 1010 by Rep. Jeremy Hutchinson, R-Little Rock, which would require anyone selling a used mattress to inform the purchaser that it is used. Under the bill, violation of the law would be a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. It passed 24-4 and goes to the House.
- HB 2087 by Rep. Mary Broadaway, D-Paragould, which would allow some cities to pass an ordinance allowing on-premises alcohol consumption without need for an election. The bill would only apply to wet communities in which at least 100 permits allowing on-premises consumption of alcohol are active. Sen. Jim Hendren, R-Gravett, said the bill would only apply to Benton County. It passed 30-3 and goes to the governor.
- HB 405 by Rep. Greg Leding, D-Fayetteville, which would prohibit smoking in and on the grounds of all medical facilities. It passed 26-3 and goes to the governor.

The House voted 72-0 to approve HB 2057 by Rep. Mark Perry, D-Jacksonville, which would make a shooting range immune from civil liability, criminal prosecution, nuisance actions or court injunctions for noise pollution if it is in a commercially zoned area and is being operated for its intended purpose between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. The bill goes to the Senate.

Two bills by Rep. Hank Wilkins proposing special license plates were considered in the House on Wednesday, one of which was approved and the other rejected.

The House voted 71-3 to approve and send to the Senate HB 1879, which would create a Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. license plate. The body rejected HB 1880, a Hispanic Americans license plate, in a 20-32 vote.

Rep. Micah Neal, R-Springdale, spoke against HB 1880, saying he did not want to start down the road of issuing special license plates for ethnic groups.

“In Springdale alone, I want to say there’s like 90-something different ethnic groups,” he said. “Do we really want to do a couple hundred license plates for different countries that we’re from?”



---

## **Redfield school supporters seek city's help in saving building (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

REDFIELD — A representative of the ad hoc Save Redfield Middle School asked the city's aldermen Tuesday to take action and make every effort to obtain the school building that is scheduled to close May 31 for use as an open charter school and community youth activities.

Redfield Mayor Tony Lawhon told Greg Farley the municipality does not have a legal standing to obtain the school building.

The White Hall School Board on Jan. 8 voted 4-2 to close the Redfield school at the end of the current school year and transfer the students to White Hall Middle School.

The task force has discussed a number of options available since the January vote, including establishment of an open enrollment charter school, asking the state Board of Education for the former Redfield School District to withdraw from the White Hall district and reverse the merger of 1950, and home schooling Redfield students.

Farley blamed apathy on the current status, adding that task force members are concerned that the White Hall district may decide in the future to close Hardin Elementary School in Redfield.

Todd Dobbins, who chairs the task force, told the Redfield City Council Tuesday that the organization is facing a looming deadline on applying for charter school status for the 2014-15 school year.

Farley said 800 Redfield residents have signed a petition in support of a charter school.

"We need the city's leaders to move forward," Farley said. "We need the city to take action. We need the council to stand up and say we are tired of being run over."

Farley asked the city to file a civil suit in an effort to dissolve the 1950 agreement merging the White Hall district and the former Redfield district.

He also asked the city to obtain a "line by line audit" of maintenance on the two schools in Redfield since 2006, contending the two schools have been "denied equal money."

Lawhon said the council can't address withdrawing from the White Hall district because the municipality has no legal standing on the issue. "There is not much we can do."

City Attorney Margaret Dobson said the council "can ask all day long (to obtain the building), but it won't happen ... (there are) limits on what the city can do."

Dobbins said the task force members are "worried Redfield children will be punished" and seek a "sense of direction" from the municipality.

“What are we going to sue for?” asked Alderman Darrell Hedden. White Hall’s enrollment is dropping, he added, and the decisions made by the White Hall district’s directors are “political and financial.”

Lawhon recommended putting a “lawsuit behind us and working on a charter school.”

In other action Tuesday, aldermen:

- Discussed the possibility of annexing the Arkansas Entergy White Bluff steam generating plant, but took no action.
  - Authorized Realtor Gary Case to list 8.4 acres of undeveloped residential property in Cabot that has been donated to the city. Case said he would recommend listing the property for \$60,000 and accept \$50,000 to sell the land.
- 

## **17 apply for position at Alpena (Harrison Daily Times)**

ALPENA — Almost 20 people applied for the superintendent position at Alpena School to replace Superintendent James Trammell.

Trammell’s retirement is effective June 30.

Board member Joe Smith said the board voted to accept applications for the position rather than using a professional search firm or requiring Trammell to collect résumés.

Smith said the board was scheduled to meet Tuesday night and hoped to make a decision on hiring a new superintendent.

Smith said applicants were:

- Darren Busch, ISS coordinator at Yellville;
- Robert Casteel, superintendent at Oregon-Howel, Mo.;
- Jeff Cantrell, assistant superintendent at Jasper;
- David Clark, high school principal at Prescott;
- Martha Dodson, middle school principal at Paris;
- Bradley Gist, high school principal at Central Arkansas Christian Academy;
- Doug Harris, director of special programs at Berryville;
- Ben Lewis of Fort Smith, retired;

- Andrea Martin, director of instruction, Green Forest;
  - Rick McCullough, department head/science teacher at Jay, Okla.;
  - Angela Olsen, director of day services at Independent Living, Inc.;
  - George Owens, high school principal at Cherryville, Kan.;
  - Malcolm Penka, K-12 music teacher at Deer/Mt. Judea;
  - Bryan Pruitt, high school principal at Bergman;
  - Don Travis, high school English teacher at Prescott;
  - Ryan Walker, assistant elementary principal at Waldron;
  - Rick Waters, high school principal at Westside.
- 

### **Tax Cut Legislation Advances (Commentary by Senator Robert Thompson, Clay County Democrat)**

The House Committee on Revenue and Taxation advanced HB 1585 to reduce state income taxes. It would cut the state's seven percent income tax rate to 6.875 percent on taxable income of \$44,000 and above. The seven percent rate now applies to taxable income of \$34,000 and up.

The current six percent rate applies to taxable income from \$20,400 to \$33,999 and HB 1585 would apply it to taxable incomes of \$20,400 to \$43,999. It would become effective for tax year 2014 and subsequent tax years.

The bill would reduce state general revenue by \$28.6 million in fiscal year 2014 and \$57.2 million in fiscal 2015, according to the state Department of Financial Administration.

Also, the committee advanced HB 1966 to lower capital gains taxes. It would create a 70 percent exemption for any net capital gains from the sale of Arkansas real property and Arkansas based businesses if they were made after Jan. 1, 2014.

It also creates an additional exemption for net capital gains on assets acquired before Jan. 1, 2014. Net capital gains up to \$5 million would continue to receive the current 30 percent exclusion, but 70 percent of gains above \$5 million be exempted.

HB 1966 would reduce state general revenue by \$3.1 million in fiscal 2014, \$10 million in fiscal 2015, \$18.3 million in fiscal 2016 and \$27.9 million in fiscal 2017.

The Senate passed SB 108, which would benefit businesses by extending the period in which they can report net operating losses on their income tax, from five to 10 years. It would apply to losses incurred after January 1 of this year.

By Fiscal Year 2020, the extended operating loss carry-forward period would save Arkansas businesses more than \$13 million a year. Within four more years the savings to Arkansas businesses would increase to \$63.4 million a year.

Members of the Senate leadership have said that they are working on tax cuts of \$100 million.

Also last week the Senate overrode the governor's veto of SB2, which requires voters to present a government-issued photo ID. The bill was sent to the House, which would have to vote to override in order for it to become law.

The Senate passed three measures to hold down costs and improve the financial integrity of the Teacher Retirement System. One measure, SB 162, would authorize the Board of Trustees of the system to raise the contribution rate of local school districts from 14 percent to 15 percent if necessary to address a critical funding issue.

A second bill, SB 123, would authorize the board to raise the contribution rate of working members from six to as much as seven percent if necessary to address a critical funding issue. SB130 would allow the board to reduce the \$75 a month benefit stipend.

The three Senate bills were reviewed by the Joint Retirement Committee before the entire Senate voted on them. Because the Joint Retirement Committee has already reviewed them, they were placed on the House calendar. That means they will not be referred to committee again, and will be voted on by the entire House.

---

### **Commentary: Lawyers, Farmers, Educators Strong In General Assembly (Southwest Times Record, Fort Smith)**

There are 135 members of the Arkansas House and Senate, and for all of them, it's a part-time job, or at least it's supposed to be. What do they do with the rest of their time, and why does that matter?

The most represented occupation, not surprisingly, is the law. Twenty-three legislators, or 17 percent, are associated with the legal profession. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the percentage of lawyer/legislators nationwide is the same.

Gov. Mike Beebe, Speaker of the House Davy Carter, R-Cabot, and Senate President Pro Tempore Michael Lamoureux, R-Russellville, are attorneys. Carter also is a banker, by the way — one of at least five that I count in the Legislature.

This is not a column to bash lawyers. Legislators make laws. That 17 percent sounds about right.

It's low compared to the U.S. Congress. According to the Congressional Research Service, 38 percent of the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and 57 of the 100 U.S. senators have legal degrees.

That 57 percent in the Senate explains a lot about why it has become the most dysfunctional legislative body in America. Lawmaking is supposed to bring together diverse people who think differently but work collaboratively. The legal system is based on antagonism.

I wouldn't want any profession to dominate the Senate. Can you imagine if 57 senators were newspaper columnists? Nothing would get done, and the speeches would go on forever.

While lawyers are influential in Little Rock, they are not dominant. Seventeen of the 23 attorneys in the state Legislature are Democrats and 12 of those are in the House, and this is the year of the Republicans, especially in the House.

In some places, attorneys are almost nonexistent — for example, in the education committees. There's not a single lawyer on the eight-member Senate Education Committee, and on the 20-member House Education Committee, there's one.

That committee, instead, is dominated by educators — 12 of them who either currently work in that profession, once did or are retired. That background affects the way they react to the bills they're presented.

Educators, in fact, make up 18 of the 135 legislators, or about 13 percent of the Legislature. Ten of the 18 are Democrats. There also are two day-care owners, both Republicans.

This being Arkansas, about 20 legislators are associated with agriculture, but this being Arkansas, half list other occupations. Another three are involved in timber.

Other well-represented professions? I count 12 associated with construction or contracting at least part-time, and another two involved in the lumber industry. Eleven work or have worked in some form of government service, including two who have been county judges. Eight legislators are associated with insurance or finance, while eight are involved in real estate, though

it's the sole occupation of only two of them.

What professions are not well represented? Five are involved in the medical field, including Rep. Deborah Ferguson, D-West Memphis, a dentist, and Rep. Stephen Magie, D-Conway, the only doctor in the House. Considering that health care and Medicaid are the most important issues this session, that's low.

Three are engineers and two are accountants. We need more of both considering all the money that the Legislature spends, and what it spends it on. Two made careers in the military:

Rep. Douglas House, R-North Little Rock, who is retired, and Rep. John Edwards, D-Little Rock, who is a colonel in the National Guard. Rep. John Catlett, D-Dover, a retired State Police officer, is the only career law enforcer I could find.

Finally, three are full-time ministers. Two others list auctioneering as one of their occupations. The House Education Committee is chaired by Rep. James McLean, D-Batesville, a funeral director. He jokes around some.

What's missing? I don't see a lot I would categorize as "small-business owners," though that's a vague term. I also don't see many from the corporate world. In both cases, it's probably not practical to leave work to make laws in Little Rock three months at a time.

Of course, unless you are retired, when would it be?

---

### **School districts' losses under bill put in millions (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

Dozens of school districts in Arkansas face the loss of millions of dollars if the Legislature approves a new funding formula championed by Senate Education Committee Chairman Johnny Key.

The Mountain Home Republican wants to change the way the state distributes money for education that is tied to student qualifications for the National School Lunch Program. This is extra education money that goes disproportionately to schools with high numbers of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches.

Senate Bill 811 would change the way nearly \$200 million is distributed.

The existing formula has three categories of funding. Districts where fewer than 70 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged received \$517 per student, and districts where 90 percent or more of the students are poor receive \$1,549 per pupil. Districts in the middle receive \$1,033 for each student.

But studies have shown small changes in student populations could result in wide funding disparities. The difference between a district with 69.9 percent of its students identified as economically disadvantaged and one with 70 percent was \$516 per student.

Under the new formula, most districts will lose funds; some will gain money.

Taking the biggest hit in terms of raw dollars is the Little Rock School District, according to an Arkansas Department of Education spreadsheet distributed Wednesday at a meeting of the Senate Education Committee.

The district would lose more than \$4.1 million if the formula took affect July 1. In the current fiscal year, it is to receive \$17.6 million but would only receive \$13.5 million if the Legislature enacted the new formula.

Other districts that would lose a large amount of funding under the new formula include the Bentonville, Cabot and Fayetteville school districts, all of which would lose more than \$1 million.

School districts in Conway, Bryant and Hamburg would lose just less than \$1 million each.

Reaction was immediate.

“There’s no way from where I stand that I can support the bill,” another education committee member, Sen. Jason Rapert, R-Bigelow, told Key. “I am going to be loaded for bear on this issue.”

The committee didn’t vote on the bill but instead engaged what Key called an “excellent conversation” about the proposal.

Tom Kimbrell, the commissioner of the Arkansas Department of Education, said the new formula was “an attempt to get the greatest amount of dollars to those school districts with the greatest percentage of economically disadvantaged students.”

To do that, he said, the department separated impoverished students into two tiers: students who qualify for free lunches and students who qualify for reduced-price lunches.

“Those poorest students require additional weight in their funding - in other words, more dollars,” Kimbrell said.

Testimony from executives from associations representing school district superintendents and school boards and others urged caution in moving too quickly, noting that many school districts are in the midst of preparing budgets and hiring for next year.

Clay Hendrix, superintendent of the Lincoln Consolidated School District in western Washington County, told the committee that his district stands to lose \$200,000 under the new formula on top of an estimated loss next year of more than \$420,000 from federal budget cuts, smaller enrollment and lower assessments.

“Next year is too soon and too fast,” he said.

But all agreed that the formula needed to be changed.

Some think the money should be spent on a few specific categories that are likely to help poor kids perform well.

Currently, the money can be spent on numerous programs, and the Bureau of Legislative Research said it’s hard to show a connection between the extra money and academic achievement gains.

“The problem is it’s become an unrestricted fund,” said Jerri Derlikowski, education-policy and finance director for Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. “If you don’t need it for low-income students, maybe you don’t need it at all.”

Key said he wanted to engage in more discussion, in particularly on phasing it in, but rejected a suggestion the bill be referred to interim study.

“It sounds like there’s widespread agreement [that] we need to change the formula,” he said. “We have agreement on that. I think we have stepped a long way toward our end goal. And now I think we have to debate and decide how we phase this.”

---

## **Arkansas has route to arm school staffs (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

A national report on school safety - put together by former U.S. Rep. Asa Hutchinson for the National Rifle Association - includes a sample draft of a law for states wanting to allow school administrators, teachers or other staff members to carry concealed weapons on campus.

But in Arkansas, school districts already can pursue a little-known avenue that allows their employees to become private, licensed security guards who are armed while on campus.

This practice has been in place at the Lake Hamilton School District, in Garland County, since the late-1990s, mass school shootings at Westside Middle School near Jonesboro and Columbine High School in Colorado, said Superintendent Steve Anderson, who as a private, licensed security guard is allowed to carry a concealed weapon on campus.

Since the December shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., several Arkansas school districts have called Anderson with questions about how he and other Lake Hamilton school personnel obtained security-guard licenses.

Arkansas State Police spokesman Bill Sadler said a two-part process allows school districts to designate certain staff members as armed security guards.

“There are several school districts in the state that are using the Arkansas private-security-guard laws to license the district as a company that can hire private security guards from among their own employees,” Sadler explained.

Those employees must then undergo the training required to become private, licensed security guards, he added.

Sadler was unable Wednesday to provide an accurate number of school districts that use that law to arm staff members, but said he should have that information available today.

The subject came up at a Wednesday afternoon news conference in Little Rock, shortly after Hutchinson said his proposal for the National School Shield initiative includes a sample of a law that would need to be passed in many states - including Arkansas - if school districts are interested in arming designated staff members.

Those who attended the news conference included Republican Arkansas Sens. Jason Rapert, Jim Hendren and Missy Irvin; sheriffs from Boone and Faulkner counties; superintendents from Clarksville,



Fountain Lake, Cutter Morning Star and Lake Hamilton school districts; and Faulkner County Prosecuting Attorney Cody Hiland.

Hutchinson described the group members as key players in putting together his proposal for the NRA, which is still considering whether it will adopt - and therefore help fund - "the National School Shield." Hutchinson, a Republican, is running for governor of Arkansas.

During a discussion Wednesday about the sample law - and whether Arkansas teachers and students would be uncomfortable with guns on campus - Anderson told the group that at the

Lake Hamilton district, there already is an armed emergency-response team that was created years ago to serve as a stop-gap in the minutes between a disaster and the arrival of first responders.

While mass school shootings are still relatively rare, such tragedies weigh heavily on the minds of educators each and every day, Anderson said.

"I've got parents of almost 4,400 students who put their trust in our school personnel to take care of their babies," he added. "I take that very seriously."

Anderson said he has never pulled his gun. A few times, he's shown people his license or badge, but only when he felt that there was a mild threat or when trying to reassure parents after the Sandy Hook shooting.

Former Lake Hamilton Superintendent Don Hensen researched the laws and became the state's first armed superintendent sometime after the Jonesboro and Colorado school shootings, Anderson said.

As for Anderson, he obtained his private, security-guard license 12 years ago, when he was an assistant superintendent at the Lake Hamilton district.

Other districts that have followed suit - or are in the process of doing so - include Cutter Morning Star, Fountain Lake and Clarksville, Anderson said.

Nancy Anderson, superintendent of Cutter Morning Star, said she is on track to become a private, licensed security guard.

Schools need to be considered safe places, she said, adding, "we can't educate in an environment in which [students] are scared."

She likens an educator's response to a school shooting to what staff members would do if a school caught fire.

"We'd run into a burning building for these kids," she explained.

Steve Anderson agreed. In a later interview, he put it this way: "Those poor ladies at Sandy Hook - they didn't run away from the shooting. They responded to it and basically gave up their lives trying to do it."

And even if Steve Anderson didn't have a license and a firearm, he would still run toward the shooter, he said.

The training for a private, security-guard license lasts one day.

It involves not only a background check, but also written and field tests, Steve Anderson said. The license expires after two years if the carrier doesn't participate in the required biennial training.

The licenses are issued by the Arkansas Board of Private Investigators and Private Security Agencies, which falls under the purview of the Arkansas State Police.

The superintendents at Wednesday's news conference said they support Hutchinson's proposal because it would offer, and - in some cases, pay for - more extensive and intense training.

"If we have individuals willing to lay down their lives ... to protect our children, then we need to have the proper training. That is key. We need to have the ability to have the tools, whatever they may be, to protect ourselves," Steve Anderson said.

At the Lake Hamilton district, Anderson and three or four other staff members are licensed as private security guards. He declined to give a specific number.

"We have a small number of school personnel, most of us professional educators, who are licensed and have access to guns. The majority of our emergency team doesn't carry them on their person at all times."

The weapons are kept in a "double-lock situation," Steve Anderson said.

In addition to the armed emergency-response team, the district employs three armed security guards who wear uniforms. Two work part time. The third is a full time guard.

Parents have long been aware that some school staff members are armed on campus, Steve Anderson said. And in a letter that he wrote after the Sandy Hook shooting, he reminded everyone of the district's armed emergency-response team.

He is quick to note that Lake Hamilton's approach to school security isn't appropriate for every district, but he thinks it would work well at rural Arkansas schools.

"I know there will be those, especially on a national level, who think we're just a bunch of backwoods, gun-toting Arkansans," he said.

"But we're not like that. We're dedicated, educated professionals who are trying to protect their kids."

---

## **Asa Hutchinson to share NRA school safety plan in Little Rock (KTHV-Channel 11)**

Video available at <http://www.thv11.com/news/article/258204/2/Asa-Hutchinson-to-share-school-safety-plan-in-Little-Rock->

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (KTHV) - Former Arkansas Congressman Asa Hutchinson, Director of the National School Shield Initiative, shared more about a plan to bolster school security on Wednesday in Little Rock.

The "model training program" would include a background check for school staffers who want to carry a firearm as well as 40-60 hours in training, Hutchinson said during a press conference at the National Press Club on Tuesday.

The report acknowledged many schools were unable to afford adding school resource officers (SROs) to their staff, which they cite as an "important layer of security for prevention and response in case of an active threat on a school campus."

"Local school leadership should make the final decision whenever it comes to what fits the individual school best," said Hutchinson.

The NRA commissioned the former Arkansas Congressman to find solutions to what appears to be a vulnerable education system.

"Teachers should be teaching in the classrooms and not worried about security and protection," said Hutchinson.

Hutchinson, along with other experts, put together a comprehensive study to find solutions. Their recommendations include a framework for weapon training, raising state safety requirements, and possibly arming specified school staff in case a school resource officer is not available.

"I have never pull that firearm, but I have access to it," says Lake Hamilton Superintendent, Steve Anderson.

Budget constraints limit Anderson from hiring school resource officers so he carries a weapon from time to time.

"There's been five times in 12 years that I've put a sidearm on during the school day, two of those days were after Sandy Hook," says Anderson.

Anderson completed a training course through Arkansas State Police and carries a commissioned security officer license.

Hutchinson says rural districts must evaluate their schools. And Soon, the National School Shield, will run an online self assessment tool for districts to answer needed security questions.

"What is your school's policy for confronting a visitor that is on the campus without authorization? Does everyone know that policy? Is there a perimeter fence? Is there one access point in the school or are there multiple access points at the school and how are they monitored," says Hutchinson.

For Anderson, this discussion goes beyond democrat and republican or liberal and conservative.

"We're willing to do whatever it takes to take care of our kids," says Anderson.